



The space between the fence and the Central Methodist building (behind Alan in the photo) will soon be transformed into a community garden.

Photo: Lisa Burnell

LIVEABLE CITY

Living in the Central city

Alan Storey, minister at the Central Methodist Mission on Greenmarket Square, lives, works and gardens in the Central City. He shares some of his urban passions with *City Views'* writer Alma Viviers over "heavenly coffee and wicked cupcakes".

True to this conviction, Alan lives right around the corner on Church Street. "It is so convenient living in the city. I don't know why people would want to live anywhere else in Cape Town. I walk and cycle 90% of where I want to go."

He is also an avid supporter of Moonlight Mass. "I just think it is wickedly cool and so we decided to jump on the bandwagon since the ride is from Green Point Circle to Greenmarket Square. We open up the church, play some music and offer free cupcakes if you bring your bike inside and park it in the pews. At first a lot of people don't realise that it is actually a church, but by the end of it they are taking pictures of themselves behind the pulpit. We really want to encourage cycling. I am telling you now, if Jesus comes back, he is coming back on a bicycle and we just want to make sure that he can park his bike here."

A new project that the church is undertaking is a community food garden along the perimeter of the building. According to Alan, the motivation comes from the Torah in which landowners were instructed not to reap their entire harvest but to leave a border of food for the three most vulnerable groups of people, namely the orphans, the widows and the foreigners.

"For me this means that the most vulnerable in society are legitimate shareholders of the businesses. It also meant that the law of the time prevented hunger

and starvation not as a governmental function but as a function of business. Since my business is church we are going to try and honour this principle in a small and public way."

"Can you imagine if every business or every landowner started planting food on the border of their property? That would be awesome on a whole number of levels: you'd be creating community; would acknowledge that we're dependent on each other; that our wealth should be shared; and that we could also help prevent hunger."

Alan Storey

The hope is that this garden will grow to provide free food that people can come and pick when it is ripe. "Can you imagine if every business or every landowner started planting food on the border of their property? That would be awesome on a whole number of levels: you'd be creating community; would acknowledge that we're dependent on each other; that our wealth should be shared; and that we could also help prevent hunger."

In addition to combating climate change and rising food costs associated with increased transport and

Afro-chic vibey coffee shop is not something you'd expect to find in a functioning church. But Heaven - the coffee shop at the Central Methodist Mission - is just one of the ways in which Alan and his congregation are trying to integrate the church into Cape Town city life.

"We opened the heavy wooden doors and installed glass doors, as well as removed the fine burglar bars that were obscuring stained glass windows. These are just small symbolic ways of opening ourselves to the city community and contributing to city life. Our aim here is to be a place of life; to offer a pleasant environment where city people, whether they are religious or not, can come to enjoy this beautiful space, a good cup of coffee courtesy of our coffee shop Heaven, and a sense of community," Alan explains.

"Now you can get into Heaven and you don't have to die first. Heaven's coffee is only possible through the generosity of Deluxe - they shared their resources and don't mind that we're selling their coffee 50 metres

up the road. African Image's Harry Stiole also did the interiors for us."

Although Alan was born in Cape Town (at the time his father was the minister at the Methodist Church in District Six, which is now the District Six Museum) he grew up in Johannesburg and lived there for the past 11 years before moving down to Cape Town in 2009.

"The salvation of the city will rest on densification, on people and community, as it always has. But it needs to be done in the right way; it has to be a densification that is inclusive of all - poor and rich, straight and gay, couples and singles, all nationalities and cultures. We need to intentionally break down divides."

Alan Storey

fuel prices, growing food in the CBD would also put people back in touch with food production and nature. Alan argues: "I started a food garden on my deck and it was incredible. I am a man and I don't have children, but when my seedlings came up I felt like I had given birth with no labour pain. I would marvel at the daily growth and when my first tomatoes were ready to eat, it was literally miraculous and mysterious and beautiful."

Do you have a balcony, sidewalk or communal garden? Why not grow edible plants in it to share freely with your community.

Explore Alan's Central City for yourself:

Central Methodist Mission
Corner of Longmarket and Burg Street
Greenmarket Square
T: 021 422 2744
www.cmm.org.za

Heaven
Entrance on Burg Street
T: 021 422 2744

Deluxe Coffeworks
25 Church Street
T: 072 569 9579
www.deluxecoffee-works.co.za

African Image
52 Burg Street
T: 021 423 8385
www.african-image.co.za